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By *ADAM FITZ-ADAM.*

To be continued every THURSDAY.

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THERE are few things by which a man diſcovers the weakneſs of his judgment more, than by retailing ſcraps of common-place ſentiments on that trite and threadbare topic, the degeneracy of the times. We are told very ſeriouſly in almoſt every company, that the courage we received from our anceſtors is evaporated; that our trade is ruined; that religion is but a badge to diſtinguiſh parties; and that the muſes, kicked out of doors, have carried off with them truth, honour, juſtice, and all the moral virtues.

BUT to our comfort, this reflection is not confined to the preſent age; it extends itſelf equally to all. A touch on the times is a piece of ſatire, that almoſt runs parallel with the foundation of every ſtate. How many authors do we hear bewailing the degeneracy of their cotemporaries, and prognoſticating the far-

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ther corruption of their poſterity! Our very ſtature is diminiſhed. Even in Homer's time, men were ſtrangely decreaſed in their ſize ſince the Trojan war. Virgil ſays, that Turnus threw a ſtone at Æneas, which a dozen Romans could not have lifted: ſo that had men decreaſed ſince the days of Virgil, in the ſame proportion, we ſhould long before now have dwindled into a race of atoms.

LIVY, who flouriſhed in the golden age of Auguſtus, tells us, that above three hundred years before, a ſpirit of equity and moderation animated the whole body of the people, which was not to be found then in one individual. Cicero is for ever declaiming againſt the degeneracy of his own times; and Juvenal ſays, that in his, vice was arrived to ſuch a height, that poſterity, however willing, would not be able to add any thing to it. Yet conſult the authors who have written ſince, and you will imagine that every former age was an age of virtue.

FROM all theſe paſſages, and many others, it is evident that this complaint is by no means applicable to our times only. And really it is a great breach of good manners, that modern fine gentlemen cannot put a little *rouge* on their faces, but the ſaucy quill of ſome impertinent author immediately rubs it off: but neither is it their own invention, nor imported from France; for Juvenal informs us, that the Roman beaux did the ſame.

THERE is but one reaſon that I know of, why a man may declaim with impunity againſt the degeneracy of the times; it is, becauſe the reflection is only general, and that he is as much the object of his own ſatire, as any other man. But let a foreigner, in a company of Engliſhmen, preſume to ſay, that they have degenerated from their forefathers, and not a Briton amongſt them but will reſent the indignity. Or let the reflection be-

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come more particular ſtill, and one man lay any act of degeneracy to the charge of another, and the conſequence is too obvious.

To lament the loſs of religion, and abuſe it's profeſſors; to cenſure the conſtitution of a ſtate, and it's conſtituents, are quite different things. And though a man may prefer the army, with which Henry the fifth beat the French at Agincourt, to our preſent ſoldiery, yet examine them one by one, and there is ſcarce a ſerjeant in the ſervice that does not think himſelf equal to the moſt valiant commander, from Alexander the great, king of Macedonia, down to brave old Hendrick, Sachem of the mohawk Indians. So that if conſidered ſeparately, we are more wiſe, more valiant, and more religious than our anceſtors; if collectively, we are a ſet of fools, cowards and infidels.

An ingenious correſpondent of mine has carried his compliments on the preſent times farther than I have done. I ſhall conclude this paper with his letter and verſes.

Sir,

A conquest over the affections and paſſions has been the higheſt boaſt of the philoſophers of every age; and in proportion as they have attained this victory, future writers have celebrated their characters, as the moſt exalted patterns of wiſdom and prudence. But though a veneration for the ruſt of antiquity, or a fondneſs for every thing which happened before the memory of our grandfathers, may lead ſome to celebrate former ages, yet we may boaſt it among the felicities of the times in which we live, that the moſt important concerns of life are entered into, only under the directions of reaſon and philoſophy. To inſtance only in one particular; marriage is the effect of mere prudence and forecaſt, without any mixture of that ridiculous paſſion, which has now no being but in play-books and romances.

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In former ages, love was ſuppoſed to keep the door of Hymen's temple; but now, as the knowledge of the world may have been ſomewhat expenſive in acquiring, and as our modern philoſophers have ſpent that fortune on their youth, which it had been ridiculous to have reſerved for the debility of old age, juſt before the laſt ſpark of vigour is extinguiſhed, ſome rich heireſs is won, who conduces both to the perpetuating a name, and to the providing a fortune for that poſterity, which is to continue the family honours. Happy expedient! by which the weight of numerous younger children, the almoſt conſtant burthen of former times, is moſt judiciouſly avoided.

That I may preſent your readers with a ſtriking contraſt between the follies of our anceſtors, and the ſolid prudence of the preſent generation, I ſhall here ſubjoin a couple of ſhort odes, which are written in the characters of an old Engliſhman, and a modern one, on the day before their marriage.

The OLD ENGLISHMAN.

I.

I'll tell you why I love my love;
Becauſe her thouſand graces prove
Her worth is very high;
She's very fair, and very good,
And not unwilling to be woo'd
By one ſo plain as I.

II.

Wherever muſe has fir'd the ſtrain,
On Britiſh or on Tuſcan plain,
Delighted has ſhe rov'd;
Has glow'd with all the gen'rous rage,
That animates the ſtory'd page,
By Britiſh boſoms lov'd.

III.

Oft has ſhe ſought, with careful feet,
The hallow'd hermit's calm retreat,

And

And trac'd with thought profound
Each precept of the wiſe and good;
There ev'ry wiſh has ſhe ſubdu'd
To wiſdom's narrow bound.

IV.

Has learn'd the flatt'ring paths to ſhun,
Where folly's fickle vot'ries run,
Deceiv'd by fortune's glare;
Has learn'd that food, and clothes, and fire,
Are only nature's plain deſire,
Nor forms for more her pray'r.

V.

Content with theſe, my GERALDINE
Has promis'd to be ever mine,
For well ſhe knows my heart;
She knows it honeſt and ſincere,
And much too open to appear,
Beneath the veil of art.

VI.

She knows it pants for her alone,
That not the ſplendor of a throne
From her my ſteps could lure:
To-morrow gives to theſe fond arms,
My GERALDINE *in all her charms,*
And makes my bliſs ſecure.

The MODERN ENGLISHMAN.

I.

No, no, by all the pow'rs above,
My heart's as little touch'd by love
As ever in my life.
Full well, dear HAL, *to thee is known*
Whom fortune to my lot has thrown,
To be my wedded wife.

II.

But why I wed ſhould any aſk,
To anſwer is an eaſy taſk;

Want;